

Written Testimony of Representative Ann Kuster (NH-2)
Make It in America: What's Next?
PANEL 3: The Future of Manufacturing

I'm thrilled to join you here today to discuss the Make it in America initiative, something I've been working very closely on back in my home state of New Hampshire. Thank you again Mr. Hoyer for giving me the opportunity to speak about this issue here today, which is so important to workers all across New Hampshire and the nation.

Since taking office, my number one priority has been to help our local businesses create more jobs and opportunity for Granite State workers. Manufacturing is such an essential part of that, but it's a piece of the puzzle that often gets lost in the broader discussion.

A recent study conducted by the New England Council shows that many folks do not understand the importance of our country's manufacturing sector. They think it's a dead art, or as noted in the study, a "declining" industry.

Since taking office, I've traveled all across the state of New Hampshire to visit local businesses, and – just as this report found – I've discovered the exact opposite about our state's manufacturers.

Companies across the state are leading the effort - with innovation and ingenuity - to modernize and revitalize our state's manufacturing industry. Most of the old-fashioned, and sometimes dangerous, tools of yesterday have been replaced with innovative new equipment and computerized technology of the future.

And that's the conversation we need to be having all across the country; how can we breathe more life into this already successful, but often misunderstood, industry? How can we modernize the manufacturing sector, so companies can not only make their products here in America, but they *themselves* can "make it in America" – and become American success stories?

For example, precision manufacturing – which custom tailors products to meet the demands of the new economy – has become the hot new tool for manufacturers all across New Hampshire, and these manufacturers are leading the way in the manufacturing industry of the future.

But as New England Council's report found, there are some impediments to the success even of those companies working to modernize.

Almost every time I visit a manufacturing company taking advantage of new technologies, I hear from the owners that far too few workers have the skills needed to enter these 21st century manufacturing jobs.

EDUCATION

And that's why another one of my top priorities in Congress is to increase access to higher education and job training for every Granite Stater.

My home state of New Hampshire ranks #2 in average college debt, which makes higher education cost-prohibitive for many students who would otherwise go on to great careers, particularly in the manufacturing industry.

That's why I'm working to expand programs to help families save for college, and to pass legislation that will help students refinance their loans at a lower rate.

I strongly believe we must not *only* focus on four-year liberal arts degrees, but we must also increase our workforce development and job training programs so New Hampshire students can learn the skills of today's innovation economy.

The New Hampshire Technical Institute (NHTI) in Concord was just named #1 for what's referred to as "value-added" by the Brookings Institute. That means NHTI students are receiving excellent educations and training, and they are meeting and even surpassing expected outcomes once they graduate.

Let's ensure that *every* student across the state can have access to this kind superior education and training. The first bill I ever introduced after taking office would provide a tax break to companies that partner with community colleges, like NHTI, to work together and provide targeted skill training so students can prepare for specific jobs. These are the kinds of programs we need to prepare our students to become the new leaders of our state's manufacturing industry and propel us forward into the future.

INNOVATION

We also need to capitalize on the talent we have here in America, and work together to pool resources and help secure America's position as a top leader in innovation.

When I first took office, I cosponsored the *Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act*, which would formally authorize funding to create a network of regional manufacturing institutes across the country. By working across the aisle, with Republicans and Democrats, we passed this legislation into law late last year. These institutes combine resources and invest in research and development, close the gap between research and product commercialization, and provide workforce development training. This is exactly the sort of public-private partnership we need more of to support the exciting work being done in advanced manufacturing.

TRANSPORTATION

Beyond education and innovation, our focus is also on transportation. We need to ensure that once we've trained the students, hired the workers, and created the products, our companies can easily ship these products and make a profit.

If we want American companies to lead in the 21st century economy, we must bring our transportation infrastructure out of the 20th century. It seems so simple, but I've heard from far too many business owners whose work has been impeded by our nation's failing and aging network of roads and bridges. Let's make sure our business owners have access to high quality roads, so they can transport their high quality goods.

CONCLUSION

These are some of the steps we need to take to revitalize our country's manufacturing industry and position our local companies as the world's top leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs.

From harnessing new technology and changing the way we talk and think about manufacturing, to expanding access to education and job training, to building up our transportation infrastructure and fighting for tax breaks for manufacturing companies making their way to the top, I look forward to working with all of you here in Congress to push these initiatives forward.

Together, we can secure America's position as the THE leader in the modern world of manufacturing. And together, we can help our small business owners and manufacturing leaders in New Hampshire and all across the country truly "make it in America." Thank you!